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# Rousseau's Crusoe myth: the unlikely provenance of the neoclassical homo economicus

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## ABSTRACT

The neoclassical homo economicus has escaped the narrow confines of economic theory and is today embodied countless times over in the everyday behaviour that so much of the modern economy is set up precisely to serve. Not all of the authors of leading books on economic principles have named the neoclassical homo economicus, but when they have done so it is overwhelmingly in the same way. They have given him the human form of a Robinson Crusoe figure, despite the fact that his behavioural motivations and his practical conduct owe next-to-nothing to Daniel Defoe's original characterisation. I suggest that the route to today's cultural familiarity with the neoclassical homo economicus instead passes through the entirely unwitting hands of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He substituted Defoe's account of the castaway's continuing deference to prevailing social norms with his own idealised vision of how the individual might use solitude to escape the corrupting influences of modern society. It is altogether another desocialised individual also bearing the Crusoe name who has latterly shaped many of the economics textbooks' renderings of the neoclassical homo economicus. However, we can get to him only by first understanding the essential features of Rousseau's Crusoe myth.

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## Introduction

Homo economicus has become something of a cultural icon.<sup>1</sup> It is hardly an exaggeration to say that for some time now he has walked amongst us, stalking our everyday decisions. This is because behavioural interventions enacted through a variety of government policies today serve as encouragement for more and more people to think and act like him. However, to suppress the alternative forms of economic conduct that are always present as at least untapped potentials first requires learning what it means to occupy the archetypal neoclassical agent's economic mindset. In particular, it requires the ability to call into the imagination the successes of somebody who already inhabits that way of being. Given the widespread imprint that homo economicus has left behind, it is surely a great irony that almost his only appearance as a named person in economics textbooks is not a real person at all. The behavioural attributes of homo economicus are often taught through reference to Daniel Defoe's fictional character, Robinson Crusoe.

When homo economicus walks amongst us, then, he follows in the footsteps of a figure who has been lifted out of an early eighteenth-century novel and placed within much later economic theories. Yet this has only been possible because he was transformed out of all recognition in his move between these two contexts. In itself, this move was patently not a single moment of transposition

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as much as something significantly more complex. It appears to have entailed a series of appeals to previously partially transformed Crusoe figures, each of which differs substantively from its immediate predecessor, and each of which was created for a different reason specific to a particular author working at a particular time and against the backdrop of a particular set of arguments. The relevant historiographical back-story is certainly somewhat messy, then, but it is no less important for that.

If it is noteworthy enough that nobody other than a fictional character can be found to put some 'real-life' flesh on the bones of homo economicus, it is surely more noteworthy still that the original fictional characterisation was itself deemed unfit for purpose. Appeals to some sort of Crusoe figure spread far and wide amongst the first two generations of self-identifying marginalists who were active from the 1870s onwards: Jevons, Menger, Edgeworth, Wicksteed, Böhm-Bawerk, von Wieser, Marshall, Clark and Wicksell all identified in him the 'someone' they needed to illustrate neoclassical behavioural principles (White 1998, p. 217). Yet not one of them had a Crusoe whose conduct resembled Defoe's character in anything but its desert island location. When Carl Menger ([1871] 1950, p. 135) repeatedly called the hypothetical agent of his neoclassical theory 'our Crusoe', the 'our' in the description was unintentionally more revealing than the 'Crusoe'. This character belongs indisputably to the early neoclassical economists. It is their creation not Defoe's, and the cultural imprints left today by homo economicus owe much to them and not to him.

Defoe's novel tells of how the castaway's life provides the perfect context for Crusoe to learn the early eighteenth-century bourgeois manners that he conspicuously failed to exhibit back at home as a young man. In the hands of the early marginalists, however, that same context is the means of illustrating how the rational everyman who so entranced late nineteenth-century economic theorists might be expected to act. This is quite some jump between two characters who consequently appear to share little other than their name. In the final twist in the historiographical tale that underpins this article I suggest that Crusoe's transformation from reluctant early eighteenth-century English gentleman to the archetype for the late nineteenth-century homo economicus was facilitated, however inadvertently, by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's writings in *Émile*. I say 'however inadvertently' because the whole of the rest of Rousseau's intellectual oeuvre features conscious refusal of the sort of economic socialisation that homo economicus represents. Rousseau, I argue, had his own personal Crusoe myth, one which differs from that of neoclassical economics but nonetheless paved the way for it. There remains an important disjuncture here, then, but the essential difference between the various Crusoes should nonetheless prompt enquiries about how they are related. There is nothing in any of Rousseau's work that acts as a direct template for the neoclassical homo economicus. Yet my argument is in any case much less bold than that. It is merely that it is impossible to understand how the neoclassical homo economicus might have been given the Crusoe name unless there is some appreciation to start with of the role played by Rousseau in changing the way that Defoe's novel was read from the middle of the eighteenth century.

Rousseau embraced Defoe's story because he thought he saw in Crusoe an Enlightenment anti-hero, someone who rejected the excesses brought about by attending to social opinion so that he might restrict his labour to catering only for natural needs (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 165). From this perspective Crusoe displayed a dignity in labour that Rousseau believed could break the bonds of having to work for a living and could therefore serve as the fulcrum of an alternative natural education. There is indeed a narrative of conversion that runs through the novel, but it is not this one (Hunter 1966, pp. 168–169). Rousseau's reading of Defoe's text emphasised the way in which salvation might occur in his *own* social system rather than Defoe's, and it does so only through selectively reading into the story a series of implications that are absent from the original (Fishelov 2010, p. 178). Despite Rousseau's determination to present Crusoe as a role model for his young charge Émile, Defoe's hero is a most unlikely instantiation of Rousseauian aspirations. His change of priorities results from increasingly explicit acknowledgment that he wishes to exhibit the characteristics of bourgeois respectability in order to ease his return to the society from which his shipwreck temporarily excludes him (Rogers 1979, p. 27). The fact that he adopts many attributes of Rousseauian asceticism in the interim is purely down to force of circumstance rather than being affirmation of a new

lifestyle choice. He does not reject the social construction of early eighteenth-century economic man so much as try to *become* that man.

Rousseau disqualified this possibility by taking the return home out of the story. Moreover, he had to, because Crusoe's constant longing for a means of escaping the island and his delight in the thought of his physical and emotional restoration to a society in which his claims on property have meaning evidently contradict Rousseau's preference for a natural education that permanent abode on a desert island facilitates. The island setting for the original novel becomes meaningful only insofar as it becomes a means of excluding competing claims on ownership (Schonhorn 1991, p. 149). For Rousseau, solitude enabled a conscious retreat from society, but the Defoe scholar Ian Watt (1951, p. 110) says that we should instead see Crusoe as having been 'stranded in the utopia of the Protestant Ethic' that Defoe treated as the purification of his own society. Solitude, in this regard, is not the reward for rejecting society so much as the punishment Crusoe receives for prioritising the intemperate pursuit of speculative riches over the bourgeois stability that Defoe treasured so highly (p. 121).<sup>2</sup> His restoration to society is conditional upon him learning how to become the type of man his father had always wanted him to be and that he latterly sees he should always have settled for being (p. 125).

In this form, though, the Crusoe figure would have been of no interest to the early marginalists. They thought that the most important task of economic theory was to strip away all social influences on behaviour so that the realm of the *purely* economic might be revealed. Rousseau's depiction of Crusoe as the manifestation of sustenance through hard work was easily turned into a morality play about a desocialised back-to-nature survivalism (Green 1991, p. 150). It was this re-characterisation that opened the door for the subsequent neoclassical depiction of Crusoe as the modern-day homo economicus. Yet his final fleshing out nonetheless involved a circuitous route that took a whole century and a half, by which time the connection back to Rousseau's Crusoe myth went unreferenced. My hope in the pages that follow is merely to draw attention to the need to think through the separate steps that allow that connection to be made anew.

The analysis will now proceed in three stages in advance of such a claim. The first section reveals the way in which Rousseau's Crusoe myth results from a selective reading of the text governed by his own prior analysis of fallen humanity that preceded the publication of *Émile*. It sidesteps almost entirely Defoe's description of the innermost thoughts that propel Crusoe's activities when living alone. Leopold Damrosch (1985, p. 197) accounts for the novel's ability to fire the imagination of the reader in terms of the tension it invokes between the island as a place of punishment and the island as a paradise on earth. However, Defoe's text concentrates solely on the former, and it is only post-Rousseau and following his reflections on the delights of a purely natural education that the idea of such a tension can be sustained. The second section contrasts Rousseau's depiction of the solitary state as a normative ideal with the psychological acts that Crusoe performs on himself to escape the full implications of being deserted on the island. Solitary existence for Rousseau is a mechanism for retreating from the social pressure to continually live in the opinion of others, but Crusoe spends much time imagining himself living up to the economic expectations of his social peers. The Crusoe figure that appears in *Émile* is therefore not Defoe's in any simple sense, but Defoe's rewritten via the philosophical model of human existence Rousseau had already outlined in his previous work. The third section focuses on the specific content of the individuals that Defoe's Crusoe summons in his imagination. He uses his time alone to experiment with imaginative devices that allow him to visualise himself assuming positions of economic power within social hierarchies. He continually calls to mind the image of subjects, and through this technique he becomes both familiar and comfortable with the idea of subjecting others economically in the search for social advancement. In this way, Defoe's Crusoe ultimately affirms Rousseau's suspicions of status-driven economic behaviour as already laid out in his *Discourse on Inequality*. The neoclassical homo economicus therefore has very curious historiographical foundations in Rousseau's appropriation of a literary figure that in its original formulation acts antithetically to his own philosophical wishes. Judged by the standards of Defoe's novel, then, Rousseau must have invented a Crusoe myth if *Émile* was to learn from

his actions. It is this, I argue, that subsequently propelled further Crusoe myths that eventually resulted in him being named as the archetypal neoclassical homo economicus. Rousseau's writings in *Émile* remain only a starting point for this process, but they are important for precisely that reason.

### Rousseau's account of fallen humanity and the instruction of *Émile*

The usual way for specialist Defoe scholars to read *Robinson Crusoe* today is as an exercise in Puritan spiritual autobiography (Starr 1976, p. 83). Crusoe himself opines that the reason for his shipwrecked state was his youthful decision to 'tempt Providence to my ruine' (p. 38) by the act through which 'I forsook my father's house and broke thro' all his good advice' (pp. 55–56). Despite his father's passionate plea for him to defer to the prevailing structure of society he ignored the move into a respectable bourgeois profession in preference for the much less assured rewards of prospecting (p. 28). The novel's narrative comes together only as Crusoe realises that physical deliverance from the island first requires spiritual deliverance via atonement for his previous transgressions of established social and economic norms (Hunter 1966, p. 188). Defoe must therefore be understood to have infused his text with cautionary tales about the dangers of rebelling against the social order of early eighteenth-century England: theological moralism was harnessed to political conservatism (Idelson-Shein 2014, p. 160). His readers were encouraged to act passively in regard to that order through the narrative trick of treating bourgeois respectability as the antidote to Crusoe's 'original sin'. Today's dominant spiritual autobiography interpretation therefore organises Defoe's text around a clear cycle of fall and redemption. It associates Crusoe's fall with the purposeful denial of filial duty and his consequent punishment takes the form of exclusion from society. True redemption is reserved solely for when providential judgement affirms the success of Crusoe's self-tutored adoption of bourgeois norms and arranges the opportunity for him to secure safe passage home.

Rousseau's rather different presentation of Defoe's story for his idealised pupil *Émile*'s instruction involves a complete inversion of this particular cycle of fall and redemption. He treated the individual's fall not as the moment at which exclusion from society takes place but as a necessary feature of the equally necessary requirement of taking the first step within society and being exposed to its deceptions. Redemption for Crusoe therefore cannot occur upon leaving the island for the return home but must be restricted to the time *on* the island when he lacks human company. This changes the content of the underlying idea of *Robinson Crusoe* as a success story. Defoe's narrative only works in its own terms because it draws the reader into assuming that Crusoe will have his one true desire satisfied by eventually being delivered home. In this regard the shipwreck is a *deus ex machina* that allows him to do his penance through solitary labour and thus earn his delivery (Billig 2014, p. 25). Rousseau ([1762] 2003, p. 166), by contrast, instructed *Émile* to treat solitary labour, not as a means to an ulterior end, but as an end in itself, especially insofar as it enabled him to feel closer to nature through the work that he does on it.

'Now, of all the occupations which can furnish subsistence to man', wrote Rousseau ([1762] 2003, p. 177), 'that which approaches nearest to the state of Nature is manual labor'. He asked his young charge to consider how Crusoe might free himself from the destabilising impact of social opinion and experiment with approximations of his hypothetical 'natural self' through the labouring tasks that Defoe's Crusoe called the 'strange multitude of little things' that make life liveable (p. 130). *Émile* is then encouraged to go one stage further and to think of himself *as* Crusoe, thus imagining the dismissive responses he would give to some of modern life's peculiarities were he able to create in his mind a perfect replica of Crusoe's pre-social position, in which anything other than performing subsistence tasks through manual labour becomes meaningless (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 168). Rousseau knew that *Émile* would ultimately have to reconcile himself to living within society, but he wanted to give him as many vicarious experiences as possible first of living as a Crusoe-type figure who could therefore take nature with him as he was eventually forced to enter society (McGrath 2010, p. 124).

It is notable in this regard that Rousseau would not allow *Émile* to read any other than the parts of Defoe's text when Crusoe is alone on the island (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 165). This amounts to only around 30% of the original novel's overall contents. In Rousseau's rather unflattering depiction it is the story 'divested of all its rubbish' (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 163). The providential intimations that frequently reappear to bind together Defoe's narrative have almost no role in what is left for *Émile* to study (Green 1991, p. 154). Defoe's theological moralism, which is so prominent especially in the early part of the story, thus gets replaced by Rousseau's pedagogical moralism (Fuchs 2004, p. 158). Rousseau would not sanction anything of a theological orientation that might help *Émile* to identify with Crusoe's efforts to reinvent himself as worthy of return to an explicitly bourgeois society. Indeed, he warned against giving children any uncensored view of modern literature. It bore the cultural imprints of a corrupted society, he said, by falsely attributing virtuous status to the bourgeois politeness of early eighteenth-century economic man. 'I hate books', was his typically forthright choice of words to illustrate the distance between the values he believed were depicted in modern literature and the values enshrined in his own principles of natural education (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 161).

The partial exception he was willing to make for *Robinson Crusoe* arose from reading into Defoe's novel the moral propriety he associated with solitude. To him, Crusoe was unique amongst literary heroes in being located 'in the place of an isolated man', from where he could live a life 'above prejudices' (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 163). The main lesson for *Émile* to take from the story was the capacity to use the solitary state to transcend the pressures of other people's opinions: 'This is how we realize the desert island which first served me as a means of comparison', he wrote (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 163). In particular in Rousseau's eyes, an isolated existence eliminated the individual's dependence on the opinion of others when attempting to derive forms of social consciousness that could carry information about perceived self-worth (Charvet 1974, p. 32). Put simply, the individual could not be an economic status-seeker when living alone. The Crusoe of Defoe's construction is a seed merchant who goes to extraordinary lengths to improve the property he claims as the shipwreck's sole survivor. The Crusoe of Rousseau's construction is instead a botanist who revels in the natural landscape into which fortune places him (Engélibert 1996, p. 274).

Throughout his early work, but never more so than in his *Discourse on Inequality*, Rousseau endeavoured to explain his preference for solitude by historicising the impact of social forms of existence on what he called the natural self. This distinctive concept is clearly nothing more than an abstraction, an idealisation of how human life might have been lived before the first impulses forced individuals for their own ease into communal habitation (Scott 1992, pp. 697–698). The concept of the natural self was designed to fill in the blanks of historical knowledge as plausibly as possible, substituting for missing ethnographies of the past so as to rationally reconstruct the trajectory of human evolution whose end-point is confirmed by ethnographies of the present (Rousseau [1754] 1993, pp. 44–46). Rousseau's use of this method enabled him to situate the natural self at the very inception of consciousness, at the point at which self-awareness was first mutually constituted with the awareness of differences exhibited by others (Kuhn 2006, p. 17). After that point, consciousness of the self co-evolved with society's prevailing structure of manners, becoming as it did so increasingly inseparable from the imagined expectations of one's most immediate peer groups (Banerjee 1977, p. 172). Crusoe cannot, of course, act as a guide for what human existence was like before consciousness, because he must be a product of the society from which the shipwreck excludes him and into which *Émile* must eventually pass. His interest to Rousseau lies in the temporary respite his island setting makes possible from social opinion and the clues that this provides for how *Émile* might be sheltered from the full corrupting effects of modern society by first having received an education conducted according to the principles of nature (Harari 1987, p. 119).

The natural self encountered in the *Discourse on Inequality* is afforded normative status that is elevated there way beyond anything that can be found in *Émile*. This is because it is in this condition only that individuals can take on an unqualified 'wholeness' and are thus capable of surrendering solely to themselves. Yet because it relates to a past to which there can be no return, the notion



of an individual who is entirely self-contained and self-sustaining must remain an unrealisable idealisation within the context of a natural education. Rousseau's strictures on the latter are not an instruction manual for creating a natural self, only a second-best that recognises how far out of reach the natural self will always be. The contrast in both instances is to socialised forms of existence, where 'society offers to us only an assembly of artificial men and factitious passions' (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 115). It is unclear whether *Émile* will ever be able to avoid a future surrounded by such corruptions, but learning to be himself through a natural education provides the most assured means of mitigating their worst excesses (Vanpée 1990, p. 46). The natural self is able to live as a perfectly self-oriented individual because the opinion of others has no bearing on decisions about how to act. Such decisions are propelled by the survival functions that the actions satisfy rather than by the social effects of having the actions acknowledged (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 71). Rousseau drew the distinction to socialised existence in the following way: 'social man lives constantly outside himself, and only knows how to live in the opinion of others' (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 116). With each person continually updating what they believe they know about themselves on account of other people's understanding of where the boundaries of social acceptability are positioned, everyone becomes an imperfect mirror for everyone else to make assessments about their own subjectivity. Consciousness of the self consequently becomes a constant struggle for self-location with respect to a moving target that is the very opposite of personal self-containment (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 102). Rousseau's account of fallen humanity centred decisively on this distinction between what people have become within society and what they might otherwise have remained in an ideal realm where the natural self flourished beyond society. The principles of natural education accept that human history cannot simply be reversed to a time before consciousness prevailed, but they do commit to making the most of what results.

Nowhere were Rousseau's principles of natural education put into practice more extensively in the late eighteenth century than in Germany. The most prominent pioneer was Johann Bernhard Basedow, whose progressive school in Dessau, the Philanthropinum, was opened in 1774. This was six years after publishing his educational tract, *Vorstellung an Menschenfreunde und vermögende Männer über Schulen und Studien*,<sup>3</sup> which itself was published six years after Rousseau wrote *Émile* as his own manifesto for a natural education (Baggerman & Dekker 2009, p. 56). The objective of the Philanthropinum was to nurture self-activity on the part of the child by departing from the existing tradition of rote learning within a religious framework. Up until then, this had figured almost exclusively as the educational backdrop through which European societies had tried to instantiate the next generation of bourgeois subjects (Louden 2011, p. 143). Instead, and in line with Rousseau's construction of Crusoe – but, importantly, not Defoe's – Basedow emphasised the love of manual work as a means of dignifying labour and the love of tending the land as a means of respecting nature for itself (Sharma 2007, p. 76). This led to an ordered curriculum that has to be contrasted to the complete *laissez-moi faire* approach that Rousseau envisioned for *Émile*. Yet it still amounted to a revolutionary embrace, for its time, of the concept of learning readiness, through which the teacher was to use play as a mechanism for detecting the point at which each pupil was deemed able to move to the next stage of their learning (Bowen 1981, p. 200). Crusoe's desert island location, which Rousseau had advocated as the primary setting for the games through which *Émile* would voluntarily begin to appreciate nature, was never far away in this regard.

One of Basedow's successors at the Philanthropinum, Joachim Heinrich Campe, took this reification of the lone desert island inhabitant to further extremes. He systematically reframed the political centrepiece of Defoe's original novel in his imitation, *Robinson der Jüngere*.<sup>4</sup> He used his Preface to say that *his* Crusoe would be an even better role model for his *Emilius* than Rousseau's Crusoe was for his *Émile* (Campe 1788, pp. 13–14). 'Mr. Rousseau is mistaken', wrote Campe (1788, p. 12).

The *Old Robinson Crusoe* [that Rousseau had allowed Defoe to set the terms for] has plenty of tools and instruments, which he saves from the wreck of a ship; whereas the *New Robinson Crusoe* [that Campe created specifically for an audience of children] has nothing but his head and his hands to depend on for his preservation. (emphasis in the original)

Campe overplayed his hand in this regard, because Rousseau's very first mention of Crusoe in *Émile* shows that what he had in mind is less Campe's 'old' Crusoe than his 'new'. The image to be presented to his young charge, he wrote, was of 'Robinson Crusoe on his island, alone, deprived of the assistance of his fellows and of the instruments of all the arts' (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 163). Rousseau's Crusoe is a direct forerunner of Campe's in starting his solitary existence without the benefits of first salvaging a stock of tools from the shipwreck. *Émile* is to imagine himself as a Crusoe without the tools of the society from which he has been excluded, because this will help Rousseau to prepare him for his preferred entry into society: 'if he himself is at work, at each tool that he is using he will not fail to say to himself: "If I did not have this tool, how should I go to work to make one like it or to do without it?"' (Rousseau [1762] 2003, p. 169). Campe's Crusoe is therefore no more of a Rousseauian idealisation than Rousseau's own. This is probably only as is to be expected, because the world that Campe created for his real-life Emiliuses at the Philanthropinum was evidently much less rough-and-tumble than the purely natural surroundings in which Rousseau would happily have had *Émile* immerse himself. It was a sanitised point somewhere between nature and society (Baggerman and Dekker 2009, p. 134).

All of this might still seem to be something of a leap to the neoclassical homo economicus. As Michael White (1982, p. 34) demonstrated in an authoritative early account of how the neoclassical Crusoe came to economics, even though it was unbeknownst to what are usually still seen as the first-generation marginalists of the 1870s, they had been beaten to the punch by Hermann Heinrich Gossen when it came both to redefining the economic concept of value in marginalist terms and to using a Crusoe figure to exemplify that conception. When Gossen ([1854] 1983, p. 54) insisted that 'the results presented [for his theory of value] conform exactly to the experiences provided by actuality', he gave the following justification:

In order to become fully convinced of this, one needs only to read Campe's tale for the young, *Robinson Crusoe*, up to the point when Crusoe finds Friday. One will then approve of Robinson's actions exactly insofar as they are in accord with our earlier pronouncements.

The important fact here is that the historiographical route from Defoe's original novel to the neo-classical Crusoe passes directly through Campe's reworking and, to his mind at least, perfecting of Rousseau's Crusoe figure. Gossen really could not have been any more explicit that this was the source for how homo economicus might latterly have been ascribed the state-of-mind of a pure maximiser. Rousseau's Crusoe escaped its author's censure because his retreat into solitude left him no-one else to please other than himself, Campe attempted to construct a Crusoe that was a flawless personification of such an escape, and it was this that caught Gossen's eye when he began his search for a suitable figure to act as his homo economicus.

The question that must be asked for my analysis, then, is which of these two forms of virtue Defoe's version of Crusoe more obviously manifests on his island. Is it the virtue born of a well-mannered engagement with bourgeois politeness or the virtue to be found in the embrace of a purely solitary state? Does it therefore involve the cycle of fall and redemption as described by literary scholars of Defoe's work or as described by Rousseau? The prospect of identifying a distinctively Rousseauian Crusoe myth that populates *Émile* depends on whether Defoe's Crusoe ever genuinely comes to terms with pre-social forms of self-realisation that being cast away makes possible.

### **Crusoe's problematic relationship with solitude**

Defoe required Crusoe to pay seemingly obsessive attention to domesticating his island. This was evidently something very different to *Émile*'s lessons in botany or the real-life Emiliuses' in tending their garden plots. It is noticeable just how hard he works himself during his time alone, far too hard to invoke the idea of the desert island as an idyllic natural setting (Rogers 1979, p. 54). His domestication strategy is explicitly one of domination, enshrining a procedural ethic through which



anything or anyone coming into contact with the island immediately becomes his property. He has a freedom to own on the island which appears markedly more important to him than the freedom he also has to enjoy the island as an unspoilt natural landscape.

As Defoe allowed but Rousseau and Campe did not, Crusoe is cast away complete with the embodied labour of capital goods that he and his dead shipmates were carrying on their doomed voyage. He therefore does not start his island sojourn with nothing, as would be the implication of taking Rousseau's principles of natural education as the point of entry, but is accompanied by useful remnants of his prior society. These goods are put to use specifically in acquisitive projects designed to enhance the value of his property. As Watt (1974, pp. 87, 88) suggests, 'Defoe's hero is not really a primitive nor a proletarian but a capitalist ... [H]is solitude is the measure, and the price of his luck' for having no competitors when asserting his property rights. Crusoe makes concerted attempts to exemplify his ability to own exclusively by fencing off his land, even though this stands in marked contrast to the contemporary accounts of the actions of marooned men on which Defoe could have drawn (White 1982, p. 37). Not one of them recounts expending labour on creating enclosures as a permanent reminder of property entitlement that might be issued to presumably only ever imagined others. Manuel Schonhorn (1991, pp. 144, 155–156) consequently associates Crusoe's efforts to enclose as much of the island as possible with Defoe's endorsement of an absolutist conception of property, whereby the first person in a state of nature to make a claim on a particular piece of land subsequently owns it fully and unconditionally.

Much can be said in this regard about how unlike the Rousseauian ideal the resulting situation is and how far Rousseau had to go in rewriting Defoe's original story to appropriate the Crusoe name for his own purposes. Perhaps most obviously, in the *Discourse on Inequality* Rousseau identified the first seizure of previously commonly-held land as the originating moment of humankind's descent into socialised forms of existence (Charvet 1974, pp. 24–25). It is, in effect, the moment at which the natural self is forever lost to a past to which Émile cannot return. 'The first man', he wrote, 'who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying "This is mine", and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society' (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 84). In his historicisation of human nature it is the property-owning individual who was the first to become mindful of displaying the fruits of industriousness as a means of social comparison: '[T]here arose rivalry and competition [... as ...] the first effects of property' (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 96). Crusoe breathes life into such effects by turning what had once been a pristine landscape into land that serves the accumulation function (Curkpatrick 2002, pp. 258–259). This good husbandry is celebrated by the Defoe scholar Maximilian Novak (1962, pp. 57–58) as evidence of the replication under trying circumstances of the 'civilised society', but this is a condition that Rousseau repeatedly denounced so that the individual might instead live a self-contained and self-sustaining life. It is clear that Campe's Crusoe also went in for husbandry in a way that was mirrored in his pupils being given their own personal garden. Even an avowedly Rousseauian educational experiment therefore let the accompanying Crusoe figure keep some of the behavioural characteristics that Defoe gave him but that Rousseau wanted to take away. Finding the right balance between nature and society, either for the abstract Émile or the real-life Emiliuses, was therefore far from an assured affair.

Furthermore, the labour that Defoe's Crusoe undertakes during his period as a castaway appears to provide him with a mechanism for whiling away his time in preference to having to reflect on the implications of solitude (Richetti 2001, p. xxiii). Admittedly, he does utter a few brave but isolated words about the restorative capacity of the time he spends alone when trying to come to terms with the error of his previous ways: 'It was now that I began sensibly to feel how much more happy this life I now led was, with all its miserable circumstances, than the wicked, cursed, abominable life I led all the past part of my days' (p. 125); 'in my silent state of life in the island ... I wanted nothing but what I had, and had nothing but what I wanted' (p. 281). Scratching the surface of these thoughts, however, makes it clear that the relevant passages are only incidentally about solitude itself. Their driving force is his gratitude for not having gone the same way as his shipmates: 'I believe it is impossible to

express to the life what the extasies and transports of the soul are, when it is so saved, as I may say, out of the very grave' (p. 65);

With these reflections I worked my mind up, not only to resignation to the will of God in the present disposition of my circumstances, but even to a sincere thankfulness for my condition, and that I, who was yet a living man, ought not to complain, seeing I had not the due punishment of my sins. (pp. 142–143)

The defining theme of Defoe's Crusoe's thoughts about being on his own therefore has little – and perhaps even nothing – to do with the condition of solitude per se. Instead it is intimately bound to his attempts both to construct a providential account of how he came to be cast away and to convince himself that Providence was justified in dispatching the fateful storm. The premise of just punishment coheres in his mind as the thought that he has been placed on the island to repent for his prior lifestyle and to reconstitute his economic subjectivity accordingly (p. 107). The new forms of self-discipline that Crusoe learns when alone are almost all directed at accommodating himself to the prospect of leading a solid if unspectacular life of middle-class sobriety when he returns home. He understands his success in domesticating the island to be a reflection of how far he has come in domesticating himself to that end.

The domination he exercises over the natural landscape consequently has a direct analogue in the domination he exercises over his own outlook on life. Both would appear to be open contradictions of Rousseau's own stated ideals. Defoe's Crusoe performs psychological restrictions on himself to ensure that he emerges from the island more in tune with the social norms of early eighteenth-century England than he was when he arrived. This is an entirely alien state-of-being for what eventually emerged in Gossen's work as the neoclassical homo economicus, who serves his purpose for economic theory precisely to the extent to which he is unaffected by any social norm whatsoever. This particular Crusoe figure, the isolated economising individual, can have no thought for how well he conforms to prevailing social norms, otherwise he would be forced to give up both his isolation and his status as an economiser. The psychological restrictions that Defoe's Crusoe enacts upon himself are facilitated by his solitary confinement. That, after all, is the whole point of giving the story a desert island setting. At no stage in his personal renewal, though, does he find the process of embodying his new character traits either easy or pleasurable. It is specifically bourgeois virtue he tries to instil in himself, not Rousseau's virtue in solitude that subsequently facilitates, via a circuitous route involving Basedow, Campe and Gossen, the wholly desocialised depiction of the neoclassical homo economicus. Indeed, Defoe's Crusoe must find a way of ending his solitude if he is to demonstrate to his own satisfaction the success of his conversion to the distinctive pattern of social manners in operation in early eighteenth-century England.

Completely consistently with Rousseau's critique of socialised forms of existence, the more that Crusoe manages to turn the island from something inhospitably alien to something familiar from his previous life the more he wishes to see others marvel at his material accomplishments. He had always craved company, but the content of his craving changes markedly as he learns over time to become a 'compleat natural mechanick' (p. 89) who increasingly excels at making goods that he can imagine having a defined monetary worth. Where once he wished for companions to help him conduct his labour more effectively, increasingly he hopes for the presence of others to pass positive judgement on how well he has done for himself to be surrounded by so much property and so many possessions (pp. 192–193). For economists today, whether textbook writers or the theorists who provide the textbook writers with their base material, the most essential feature of the Crusoe construction continues to be that he is always 'doing the best he can' (Nechyba 2011, p. 546). However, there is a subtle development of meaning in operation here. Defoe's Crusoe does not attempt to transcend the social construction of eighteenth-century economic man so much as make great efforts to embody its most essential characteristics. He wants people to see how well he has done for himself, but only within that specific frame of reference. The marginalist originators of the neoclassical homo economicus, by contrast, believed that they had deprived him of all historically bound social constructions of economic man by mimicking the wholeness that Rousseau had first attributed to the natural self

and later set as a goal for Émile. This enables him to do the best he can in a much more fundamentally self-enclosed sense.

Defoe's Crusoe, however, becomes the epitome of Rousseau's fallen humanity, attempting to live in the opinion of others even when there are no others physically present to hold a favourable opinion of him. Even his providentialist account of the fateful storm through which he was cast away serves two purposes. It means most obviously that he can rationalise the need to become the man of good bourgeois character as an act of atonement for past economic indiscretions (Rogers 1979, p. 52). More subtly, it also creates an authority figure in his mind from whom he can seek endorsement of the ongoing reconstruction of his economic subjectivity. By secularising his vision of an unseen deity, Crusoe is able to prepare himself for an untroubled return home (p. 146). What he needs to do to impress God with his attempts at spiritual redemption through hard work simultaneously corresponds to what he will need to do to fit inconspicuously into the prevailing bourgeois order back in England. Rousseau's Crusoe, which eventually evolved into Gossen's, exhibits none of these thoughts, because he bears the influence of neither a theological moral nor the celebration of middle-class civility. Despite both Campe's and Gossen's personal deference to the religious norms of their day, the Crusoe figure that Gossen created for economic theory from Campe's is sufficiently abstract to deny the influence of all cultural promptings.

Interestingly, even Defoe's Crusoe ends all pretence to a truly providential reading of his circumstances at the first moment company arrives (p. 269). This is also exactly the same moment as the prosperity that he works so hard to build through cultivating his land suddenly becomes *socially* significant. And it is also when Rousseau ([1762] 2003, p. 163) insisted that he ceased to be of interest to Émile and when Gossen ([1854] 1983, p. 54) insisted that he ceased to be of interest to economic theory. For Defoe's Crusoe, learning to be conditioned by the economic norms of early eighteenth-century English society means learning to commit himself to accepting other people's assessments of the mark he has left upon the world. In the absence of company during his time alone on the island there are no human others in whose opinions he could attempt to live. Instead he creates for himself a God to whom he talks in human form (p. 146). He tries temporarily to live within the opinions of this God, albeit only to generate vicariously what in reality is secularly derived approval for having aligned his labour to the demands of middle-class domesticity. Insofar as he flirts with a real spiritual conversion at all this appears only ever to be a front for his economic conversion to a lifestyle that Rousseau ([1754] 1993, p. 109, [1762] 2003, p. 186) dismissed on purely philosophical grounds and tried his best in practical terms to shelter Émile from.

Defoe's Crusoe's instrumental appropriation of religion should therefore be understood as evidence of his failure to come to terms with the possibility, to use Rousseauian language, of 'living within himself' (Shinagel 1968, pp. 128–129). Albeit in different ways, for different reasons and guided by different motivations, the neoclassical homo economicus operates on this Rousseauian plane, but Defoe's Crusoe does not. Not once does he prepare himself for exiting the mindset appropriate to socialised forms of existence, even when he is physically deprived of society. Every aspect of Crusoe's time alone on the island is haunted by a deep ambivalence about the possibility of being forced psychologically into himself (Sill 1983, p. 161). He makes no attempt to render himself whole again in the manner of Rousseau's depiction of a life lived solely in accordance with the precepts of a purely natural education.

### **Crusoe's imaginative reconstruction of subjects**

Defoe's Crusoe's solitary state during his time alone means that he experiences company at that time only ever vicariously. People's opinions come to him via mental practices of imaginative reconstruction. Rousseau's perspective on the imagination in general was critical – 'abstractions [of the mind] are painful and unnatural operations' (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 67) – and he became increasingly entrenched in his criticism the more that the imagination was occupied solely with normalising socialised forms of existence. He first announced his suspicion that humankind's fall from the

natural state was linked to imaginative acts in the opening passages of the *Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences*. There, he described the needs of the mind as the ‘ornaments’ of society (Rousseau [1750] 1993, p. 4), the accomplishment of mental tasks serving initially to establish and then to reproduce the norms that elicit socialised behaviour. Governed by the realm of the imagination, ‘We no longer dare seem what we really are but lie under a perpetual restraint’ (Rousseau [1750] 1993, p. 6). In his *Letter to d’Alembert* he described that restraint specifically as ‘the empire of opinion’ (Rousseau [1758] 1968, p. 22). Rousseau reduced the actions of modern economic man to the promptings of an imagination that is limited in its scope of possibility by the prevailing system of manners (Ryn 1997, p. 43). The desire to attain objectives that first enter the consciousness as aspirational devices arises only through the way in which contact with others establishes hierarchies of possessive individualism in the mind (Scott 1992, p. 702). In Benjamin Barber’s (1978, p. 82) words, ‘Rousseau seems to reconstruct a classic ascetic case against [the imagination]’.

The one imagination that appears to be exempt from such pressures is Rousseau’s own. According to his autobiographical work, this is because he successfully tutored himself to isolation and consequently deprived his imagination of the corrupting influences of socialised forms of existence (Yousef 2001, p. 262). Interestingly, though, the practices he described in *The Dialogues* situate him physically but not psychologically in isolation. The solitude that he willingly enforced upon himself was designed specifically to allow him ‘to bring together the sweetness of study and the charms of intimacy’ (Rousseau [1782] 1990, p. 14). That is, he used his time alone in an attempt to understand more about himself through the hypothetical reconstruction of his relationships with his closest friends. As he himself put it, ‘I fostered [such thoughts] in an ideal world which my creative imagination soon peopled with beings after my own heart’ (Rousseau [1782] 1953, p. 398). The choice of imaginative companions is significant, because in Rousseau’s schema a thoroughgoing egalitarianism structures the relationship between close friends. Social conventions do not interpose into the way in which such people relate to one another, restoring to them a wholeness that does not have to be sacrificed to the simulation and pretence of society (Barber 1978, p. 85).

However, the original Crusoe’s imaginative reconstruction of company could hardly have been more different. Defoe failed to place in Crusoe’s imagination friends to whom he can issue love, so much as temporary acquaintances whom he has no desire at all to know well (Grapard 1995, p. 33). It is arguably *the* defining feature of the neoclassical homo economicus that he has nobody other than himself to call to mind, imaginatively reconstruct and vicariously relate to. Insofar as Rousseau’s Crusoe might be expected to follow Rousseau himself if he is to be the perfect role model for Émile, then he must use the imagination to engage at least his close friends. There are certainly plenty of hints that Campe’s Crusoe does so. Neither, therefore, is the neoclassical homo economicus in his own right. Defoe’s Crusoe, perhaps unsurprisingly given what has already been said, also remains a resolutely imperfect template for the neoclassical homo economicus, because he is sure that temporary acquaintances are socially meaningful to him at the moments at which they impinge upon his stock of property in some way. However, the extra characters that Defoe introduced to his text so that he could write parables of property ownership only enter Crusoe’s consciousness as either the purveyor of things or the judge of their social value once these things are physically in his possession.

Defoe’s Crusoe takes such a perspective to its logical extreme in treating anyone he encounters in the same way as material goods by objectifying them and rendering them suitable for subordination. He does not relate to people through the pure human wholeness that Rousseau ([1782] 1953, pp. 212, 395) wrote about approvingly when describing the egalitarian relationship he enjoyed with his friends. This is the same human wholeness that he believed Émile could learn from his version of Crusoe. Instead, Defoe’s Crusoe uses contractual obligations where the main aim is to enable him to dominate. This might explain why his mind appears to attach itself much more expediently to the idea of saving Europeans than non-Europeans (pp. 177–179, 212–213, 233). He recognises specifically in Europeans the likelihood that they will abide by the same standards of contractual obligation as he does (Hymer 1971, pp. 31–32). These are people who away from the island

would be his equals in the face of the law, but who on the island will be culturally disposed to treat his antecedent claims to property ownership *as* the law (Grapard 1995, pp. 42–43). Even the captain of the ship that eventually restores Crusoe to his own society is required to submit himself to the political structure of legitimacy transposed from that society in order to respect the procedural ethics of Crusoe's right to property on the island (pp. 253–254). The use of contractual obligation to determine the content of personal relations thereby becomes a means through which he establishes his dominion over the entire lifeworld associated with the island, whether inanimate or animate, non-human or human.

In all of this Crusoe's imagination departs from Rousseau's by calling up representations of subjects rather than of friends. Crusoe's instinct is always to narrate his relationship to others in terms of hierarchies that he stands atop, enacting quasi-regal prerogatives to be followed by subordinates: 'my people were perfectly subjected: I was absolute lord and lawgiver' (p. 241). As Schonhorn (1991, p. 152) notes, his 'rhetoric of absolutism and submission, of kingly authority and subject obedience, places the right and might of sovereignty in the office of the monarch'. The irony is completely lost on Crusoe that in expecting such a high level of compliance to a social order that he has established by convention he requires much more of other people than he was willing to countenance of himself as a younger man.

His political conversion to the idea of an established order begins when fantasising that his meal times in the company of his parrot, dog and two cats represent a social hierarchy with him at its apex: 'see how like a king I dined ... all alone, attended by my servants' (p. 157). This follows his decision, in his sixth year cast away, to set off in his hand-made canoe to sail around the island as a means of familiarising himself with the thought of property ownership. The decision is justified by his 'being eager to view the circumference of my little kingdom' (p. 147). Tellingly, this is when he initially begins to describe his time on the island as 'my reign' (p. 147): 'if I pleased, I might call my self king ... over the whole country which I had possession of. There were no rivals; I had no competitor, none to dispute sovereignty or command with me' (p. 139). The Defoe scholar J.R. Hammond (2001, p. 74) has gone as far as to suggest that *Robinson Crusoe* can consequently 'be regarded as a "god game" romance, a genre in which a masterful figure on an island assumes the attributes of a divinity'.

It is clear from this that the conception of sovereignty underpinning the novel's narrative structure operates simultaneously at two distinct levels. Defoe's Crusoe's articulation of Puritan piety – however instrumental it might be deemed – places him under the control of providential sovereignty (Starr 1976, p. 91). Yet the manner in which he claims property rights over the land on which he is set down to ostensibly do God's will allows him to act upon an exclusive sovereignty with respect to the island's lifeworld (Novak 1962, pp. 62–63). Providential and imperialistic sovereignty thereby co-exist, with Crusoe seeking the approbation of God for involving himself throughout the text in the expropriation of the island's natural landscape for imperialistic purposes (Engélibert 1996, p. 269). The presumed legitimacy of such power is thus the ideological superstructure which maintains the unequal relationships that he constructs to his own advantage.

For Rousseau ([1754] 1993, p. 85), the identification of power as a resource to be used self-interestedly represents a significant moment in his historicisation of the distance that humankind has travelled from the natural self. He argued that there are specific living conditions unique to socialised forms of existence that have to be in place for the concept of power to become meaningful as an aspect of individual consciousness. For anyone to exhibit patterns of behaviour consistent with the desire to incorporate anyone else into an effective dominion,

he would have to know that there are men who set a value on the opinion of the rest of the world; who can be made happy and satisfied with themselves rather than on the testimony of other people than on their own. (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 116)

He associated the quest for power unequivocally with 'this unrelenting rage of distinguishing ourselves' (Rousseau [1754] 1993, p. 112). Everything once again relates back to the imaginative leaps that the natural self cannot make because of the absence of the comparative reference point arising



from self-awareness. Only individuals experiencing the fall into socialised forms of existence know what it is to think of themselves in situations in which they might be advantaged by subordinating other people's interests.

Individuals seek superiority in a Rousseauian world because they compete for the esteem that constitutes external ratification of their social standing (McLendon 2003, pp. 121–122). Defoe's Crusoe proves that he is not Rousseau's Crusoe by doing this in the imagination in the first place so that he can construct for himself a regal personality that he increasingly comes to internalise. Once manifested in this way it can subsequently be used in earnest to determine the content of his relationships when he is no longer alone on the island. The feeling of additional self-worth he derives from imaginatively depicting himself in positions of power translates latterly into attempts to acquire subjects as a means of enhancing his perceived self-worth still further (pp. 157, 207–209, 218–221). Crusoe's constant attention to domesticating his land is inexplicable in its own terms, as its intrinsic economic worth to him is exhausted the moment it meets his subsistence needs. Rousseau's Crusoe, the botanist who acts as *Émile*'s guide to nature, will not work beyond the point of making the land sustain him. The actions of Defoe's Crusoe only become easier to understand when considering how, from the perspective of early eighteenth-century economic man, the implicit value of property serves as a direct proxy for the esteem that can be generated from owning it. He is therefore definitively both *a* socially constructed economic man, the like of which the early marginalists tried to write out of economic theory, and *the* specific socially constructed economic man against whom Rousseau offered his principles of natural education as an alternative normative ideal-type.

It is therefore necessary to think more deeply about how the Crusoe figure that Rousseau refashioned to his own ends in *Émile* latterly re-emerged as another rather different Crusoe figure that the neoclassical economists made serve as their homo economicus. Ridding Crusoe of the specific social artefacts of Defoe's time and place was the first step in turning him into the blank canvas of a thoroughly desocialised individual. It was by no means preordained, though, that this would lead to Crusoe having the features of the neoclassical homo economicus latterly painted onto him. However, every journey must start somewhere, and Crusoe's journey out of the pages of literature and into those of theoretical books on economic principles begins here, with Rousseau. The next steps involved Basedow's founding of a progressive school in Eastern Germany on Rousseauian principles, and his successor Campe's systematic rewriting of *Robinson Crusoe* in an attempt to provide his pupils with what he thought was an even better role model for a natural education than Rousseau had managed. The final steps were taken when Gossen seized upon Campe's Crusoe figure to illustrate his very early marginalist theory of value and when what conventionally are still seen as the first-generation marginalists subsequently reconciled their abstract economising agent to Gossen's trailblazing theory of value. The marginalists of the early 1870s were unaware of Gossen's prior work when setting out their own analytical frameworks, but they soon accepted Gossen's right to precedence upon the publication of the first history of marginalism, which appeared in 1879 in the second edition of Stanley Jevons's *Theory of Political Economy* (see Jevons [1871/1911] 2013, pp. liii–lx). Each of these moves towards the neoclassical homo economicus required, in its own terms, something of a leap in the dark. None was necessarily suggested by what had gone before. Yet each would have been highly unlikely to have taken the form by which we now know it had the preceding stages not occurred as they did. There is thus still much to gain from examining closely Rousseau's Crusoe myth because of what came after it.

## Conclusion

Rousseau remarked in his autobiographical writings that he stood outside of society most obviously in his rejection of contrived appearance and his commitment to providing a truthful representation of himself (Rousseau [1782] 1953, p. 17). The propensity for inauthenticity, he argued, is indicative of the extent of humankind's fall from the natural state (Rousseau [1750] 1993, p. 5, [1754] 1993, pp. 81–82, 88). In this respect it is something of a puzzle that he was prepared to present *Émile*, a



boy whose natural education was to be conducted in line with his principles of life, with an egregious Crusoe myth (Rousseau [1762] 2003, pp. 163–165). The romanticised story of a socially-abstracted Crusoe acting in accordance with what nature allows is impossible to reconstruct from Defoe's text. But it is this that Rousseau fully committed himself to.

Rousseau is clearly culpable for this mischaracterisation of Crusoe as an effective approximation of how far his theory of a natural education could take an individual along the path to the natural self. Yet he is entirely blameless for the way in which his mischaracterisation has passed through several subsequent hands to re-emerge as the basis for the neoclassical homo economicus. It too trades on the instinctive association that the Crusoe name triggers to a back-to-nature survivalism. Most of us will recall from our childhoods retellings of the Crusoe story that take this form, and it is all-too-easy to substitute these re-workings for what is actually to be found in Defoe's original text. They become what the memory says is 'known', and it is not far from this understanding of Crusoe's efforts to do his best in the struggle against nature to the basic outline of the neoclassical homo economicus. There is a cultural suggestibility in operation here – Crusoe becomes the neoclassical homo economicus because that is what we want to believe he is – but it has only inadvertent roots in Rousseau's work. He was merely the first to impose upon Crusoe the attributes of a desocialised agent, an idealised and potentially transcontextual 'economic man', that the early marginalists found so convenient for their theory.

Reading backwards from the 1870s, the marginalist pioneers Jevons and Menger were surprised to discover that their Crusoe figure was not, strictly-speaking, their own, because Gossen had pre-empted them by almost twenty years in illustrating marginalist principles via a Crusoe figure. Even then, though, Gossen's Crusoe figure was not, strictly-speaking, Defoe's, because he referenced Campe's imitation and not Defoe's original. Campe's *Robinson der Jüngere* was part of his broader pedagogical writings that, following Basedow, experimented with putting into practice the principles of a natural education that Rousseau outlined in *Émile*. But even then there were definite departures from what Rousseau had presented as the ideal. Nothing is as it seems at first glance, then, in the historiographical back-story to how the Crusoe figure has come to stand in for the neoclassical homo economicus. That back-story in itself plays no part in the economics textbooks' presentation of the neoclassical homo economicus, notwithstanding the times at which this presentation directly references the so-called Robinson Crusoe Economy (Hewitson 1999, p. 111). A Crusoe figure nonetheless remains intensely important to the cultural precepts on which the modern economy is founded. Economic theory is a crucial source of authority for the inculcation of behaviour consistent with the neoclassical homo economicus, and it is still a Crusoe figure that is most readily brought to mind whenever attention turns to naming someone who might pass muster as the neoclassical homo economicus.

It is genuinely perplexing just how many jumps are necessary to get from Defoe's original novel to the cultural significance of today's economics textbooks. The neoclassical homo economicus is now pushed often really rather aggressively as a cultural project, but it is difficult to conclude anything other than he was created by accident. At the very least, he relies for his believability on a particular variant of the Crusoe figure who has a most unlikely provenance. Rousseau ([1754] 1993, p. 73), arch-critic of the modern economy's encouragement of 'purely relative and factitious feeling', appropriated Defoe's Crusoe figure and turned him from everything that he found so contemptible about socialised forms of existence into a role model for a 'natural' lifestyle that celebrated the radical autonomy that the individual gains when opting out of society. The early marginalists subsequently appropriated Rousseau's Crusoe figure, albeit only after it had passed through the hands of Basedow, Campe and Gossen, so that a named desocialised economic agent could be used to exemplify the maximisation properties of pure economic theory. This is a haphazard and entirely unplanned route to homo economicus's current status as a cultural icon. The flimsiness of the links through which he has been brought to life is well worth bearing in mind next time one feels the social pressure to be like homo economicus.

## Notes

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2. All of the references to the text of *Robinson Crusoe* take this form and they relate to Defoe ([1719] 1985) listed in the bibliography.
3. This is typically translated into English as *Proposal to Philanthropists and Men of Means Regarding Schools and Studies*.
4. *Robinson der Jüngere* translates directly from the German as *Robinson the Younger*. However, Campe's book entered the English language from his French translation that he published as *Le Nouveau Robinson*, and for this reason it is usually translated into English as *The New Robinson*.

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